DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 205 629 UD 021 496

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TITLE The Effects of Racial Discrimination on the Social Reality Perceptions and Childrearing Patterns of Black Mothers.
PUB DATE Apr 81
NOTE 37p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Black Attitudes; *Black Mothers; *Child Rearing; Educational Attainment; Educational Environment; *Parent Child Relationship; Racial Bias; *Racial Discrimination; *Role Perception
IDENTIFIERS Pearson Product Moment Correlation

ABSTRACT

This paper presents the findings of research that examined the effects of racism on the social reality perceptions and childrearing patterns of black mothers. The study focused on the following questions: (1) how do black mothers perceive racism? (2) how do their perceptions of racism correlate with their "blame orientations?" and (3) how do their "blame orientations" translate into childrearing patterns with regard to racism? Provided in the paper are: (1) a discussion of theoretical formulations which served as the foundation of the study; (2) a description of the four conceptualizations of "blame orientation" and how they were used in the coding and data analysis procedures; and (3) based on the statistical techniques of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation to interpret results of the correlational analyses of the data, a presentation of the study's findings and their implications for educators and human services personnel. It is argued that correlations exist between: (1) the educational status and cultural/racial characteristics of the educational environment of the last school attended, and the mothers' "blame orientations" and perceptions of racism; and (2) the mothers' "blame orientations" and their childrearing patterns. (Author/APM)

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THE EFFECTS OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION ON THE SOCIAL REALITY PERCEPTIONS AND CHILDREARING PATTERNS OF BLACK MOTHERS

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April, 1981

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THE EFFECTS OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION ON THE SOCIAL REALITY PERCEPTIONS AND CHILDREARING PRACTICES OF BLACK MOTHERS

Introduction

Racism exists as a sociocultural and ecological phenomenon in American society. As a culturally sanctioned belief system it operates within the individual psyche and institutional structures of the society. It impacts on whites and blacks in various direct and subtle ways. Most importantly, however, it functions to make the social realities of blacks different from the social realities of whites. A review of the social science literature which looks at the behaviors of black people indicates that this issue has received very little attention.

The black family has been written about perhaps more than any other aspect of growing up black in America.[38] Social science perspectives on black maternal childrearing practices have traditionally emphasized differences in the mother's values, goals and behavioral processes as compared to those of white mothers. The perceptions of the sources of these differences vary widely, depending upon the point of view and assumptions of the observer. Three major assumptions characterize the bulk of this research: (1) that the societal environment, including its ideological and structural components, is a

benign environment; (2) that equal opportunity exists and universal standards are applied equally for all individuals[18]; and (3) that all members within our society share the same cultural background and history. Racism contradicts all of these assumptions, and to the extent that social scientists have ignored or failed to perceive it as a critical element in the cultural and experiential realities of black people, our information about and understanding of black behaviors has been extremely limited and distorted.

This research examines the effects of racism on the childrearing patterns of black mothers. The study began with the following questions: (1) How do black mothers perceive racism? (2) How do their perceptions of racism correlate with their "blame orientations"? and (3) How do their "blame orientations" translate into their childrearing patterns with regard to racism?

This paper will argue that correlations exist between: (1) the two background factors of educational status and cultural/racial characteristics of the educational environment of the last school attended, and the mothers' "blame orientations"; and (2) the mothers' "blame orientations" and their childrearing patterns. First, I will present a brief discussion of the theoretical formulations which served as the foundation of this study. Then I will describe four conceptualizations of "blame orientation" and how they were used in the coding and data analysis procedures. Finally, using the statistical techniques of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation to interpret the

results of the correlational analyses of the data, I will present this study's findings and their implications for educators and other human services personnel.

Theoretical Background

Social interactionist theorists believe that social learning takes place through socially interactive processes, and behavior occurs as a result of these interactions.[4,6,23,24,26,28,29] Human behavior, therefore, is viewed as a function of the interaction which occurs between the individual and the environment.[26] The individual comes into being, as it were, by forming her personal identity from social interactions in which she learns what others think and expect of her, and from assuming the role and perspective of significant others--especially toward herself. She also tests, selects and integrates the many self-representations provided by these social interactions.[18] Identities, therefore, are social products which are formed and maintained through the social processes which occur within the context of environments.

Environment, as it relates to human developmental processes, refers to both internal and external phenomena--the individual's own self, as well as the physical and social externalities of her environment. Individuals are in continuous intra- and interaction with their environments.[4] The importance of the environmental context of human behavior is reflected in the theorists' elaboration on the concept of environment.

Social interactionist theorists insist that the environ-

ments of human behavior include not only the immediate setting of the individual, but also the interconnections between settings and the external influences which emanate from the larger surrounding society.[4] These theorists also take seriously the proposition, expounded by psychologists and sociologists alike, that what matters for behavior and development is the environment as it is perceived, rather than as it may exist in "objective reality."[39] In other words, individual perception or phenomenological conceptualization of environment has primacy over the real environment in determining behavior.[4]

The individual's social reality perceptions are derived from the experiences which she and members of her social group have had in their objective environments. The proposition that all men think, feel and see things from a standpoint peculiar to the group in which they participate has been repeatedly emphasized by social scientists.[29]

Erikson,[12] in his discussion of the concept of ego identity, stressed the importance of the relationship between personal and group identity. The significance of this relationship between personal and group identity is described as follows:

> All individuals will have elements of identity that reflect unique integrations of social experiences as well as those elements that are common to other members of the group with which they identify. One's sense of identity has to involve both the uniquely personal and collective elements that result from social interaction and group

identifications.[18]

Gurin and Epps[18] have argued that 'minority status" sharpens the universal necessity of group belongingness for the development of a sense of identity. They contrast dominant and minority group members' collective aspects of personal identity:

> Young people belonging to the racial and ethnic majority may be only dimly aware of the collective aspects of personal identity, although they, too, have developed a sense of continuity through social interactions embedded in particular groups. Young people from an ethnic or racial minority group are much more conscious of the group elements of identity because others define them as Black, Chicano, Chinese or Jewish.

Other scholars, using an historical and cultural approach to the study of black behavior, have provided more evidence which supports the significance of this collective aspect of identity for blacks.[8,25,30,31]

Nobles[30] incorporated the collective identity aspect of personal identity into Mead's[28] self/object development of meaning theory. He used the concept of "we" to represent the collective aspect of self-identification. The origins of the "we" sense of self are found in African cultures which value communalism over individualism.[30] In America, one's color is the primary significator of group identity, and:

> The fact that Black people are viewed and treated as a caste means that individual fulfillment must be considered by the condition of the larger group of Blacks in this

society.[8]

Individual blacks may or may not be conscious of their caste status position within the American social structure. However, their perceptions of racism and their analyses of the sources of the racial inequities that exist within this society do impact upon their social reality perceptions and their childrearing patterns.

Procedures

Perceptions of racism: blame orientation

Sixty-two black mothers living in the greater Los Angeles metropolitan area, each with at least one child age four or older, were interviewed for this study. This paper presents only a part of a larger study which examined several social background, psychological and childrearing factors. The research was conducted in the respondents' own homes instead of in the laboratory or similarly unfamiliar scholarly domains of traditional research. Selected findings are reported for only one of the psychological factors and two of the child-rearing patterns. The semi-structured interview schedule included a series of open-ended questions about the mothers' social backgrounds, concepts of racism, and their childrearing patterns with regard to racism. Each individual mother's responses were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Part of the data collection process involved specific inquiries into the mothers' perceptions of what constitutes racism. This maternal conceptualization was captured by asking

two specific questions:

(1) "Two child psychiatrists have said, 'Being black in this country full of anti-black feelings and/or actions (racism) presents real problems.'" The respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with this statement, and if they agreed, to describe some of these problems.

(2) "Do you believe that there are limitations placed on blacks in this country that are not placed on other groups?" Respondents were again asked to explain their "yes" or "no" response to the question.

Mothers' responses to these two questions were viewed as indicators of their conceptualizations of racism; the questions were expected to identify the mothers' perceptions of both individual "anti-black feelings and/or actions" and societal "limitations." Over ninety-five per cent of the mothers agreed with the statement on anti-black feelings and/or actions, and believed that societal limitations existed for blacks.

The categories that I developed to code the mothers' responses to these two "concept of racism" questions were based on four similar conceptualizations of "blame orientation": Rotter's[36] conceptualization and development of the Internal-External Control Scale designed to measure the individual's concept of the extent to which she can exercise control over her own life chances (locus of control); William Ryan's [37] "Blaming the Victim" analysis of blame theory; a discussion and analysis by Gurin and Epps[18] of the special significance of "system-blame" as an external control variable for blacks;

and William E. Cross's[7] theory on the psychology and processes of black liberation. These four conceptualizations of individual psychological orientation toward or feelings about the sources of control over one's life chances (or "blame orientation") are described briefly below.

Traditional social scientists argue that the Rotter Internal-External Control Scale[36] is an effective instrument for measuring an individual's perception of her ability to control her own destiny. High internal control scores are equated with a belief in one's own competence and ability to do what one sets out to do, regardless of external forces. High external control scores are equated with fatalism or "happenstance" and one's sense that her success or failure is a matter of luck or change and/or controlled by outside forces. These interpretations of the significance of such values are often proven inaccurate or inappropriate in our multicultural and racist society.

Several studies have shown that perceived locus of control can be affected by cultural background.[34,40] Results of the Garza and Ames[14] comparative study of locus of control in Chicanos and Anglos, for example, indicated that the Mexican-Americans were significantly less external in their perceptions of locus of control, and, contrary to popular stereotypes, the Anglos scored higher on fatalism. These authors hypothesized that the family-centered values orientation of Mexican-Americans accounted for their higher internal control scores.

Gurin and Epps[18] pointed to the Rotter Scale's failure

to distinguish between personal values and expectancies. They argued that this omission in the Rotter Scale must be taken into account in discussing the external scores of blacks--which are usually higher than those of whites. Given the social realities of blacks in America, these external control values are not necessarily negative; on the contrary, the authors state that:

> Realistic assessment of the impact of social constraints can not only help people cope with these constraints, but it can protect them from the damage to personal identity that comes from . . . (self/group blame) for the inequities. . . .

The benign societal structure assumption and its corollary--the failure on the part of researchers to assess and account for the impact of social constraints on individuals and groups--are analyzed in Ryan's[37] "Blaming the Victim" thesis. He focused on the blame orientations reflected within our societal structures' responses to social problems, and argued that "blaming the victim" is"

> . . . an ideological process. . . . It is a set of ideas and concepts deriving from systematically motivated, but unintended distortions of reality . . . develop(ed) from the "collective unconscious" of a group or class and is rooted in a class-based interest in maintaining the status quo.

This ideological process is used to define social problems by ignoring a "whole set of factors that are usually considered

relevant"--for instance, unequal distribution of income, social stratification, ethnic and racial group conflict, and inequality of power.

> The crucial criterion by which to judge analyses of social problems is the extent to which they apply themselves to the interaction between the victim population and the surrounding environment and society, and conversely, the extent to which they eschew exclusive attention to the victims themselves. . . .[37]

The individual's analysis of blame, or "blame orientation," can be similarly assessed. The victim-blaming individual analyzes racial and/or social inequities by subscribing to the values, norms and mores of the dominant society which are based on the Protestant work ethic ideology and which posit that morality and hard work are equated with success.[18,27] Believing that hard work, morality and competence are equated with reward, the victim-blaming individual attempts to cope with racism through the use of traditional modes of personal success and mobility. She values education and believes it will be rewarded equally--or "nearly" equally--regardless of color. Although she knows that a black "has to be ten times better than a white to be equal," she strives to achieve in the conventional manner. Being tied to the individual achievement syndrome, she has but one contextual option for explaining the failures experienced by black individuals or the group in general--the Protestant ethic context, which ascribes failure to personal inadequacy, laziness, immorality, lack of perseverance, etc. On the other

hand, the system-blaming individual, who analyzes racial inequities from a systems analysis or societal structural point of view, has many more realistic and demonstrable options for explicating the reasons for the black/white social reality differences which exist within society.

Gurin and Epps[18] argue that the system-blame analysis of racial inequities is a reflection of a healthy perspective on the external realities which do exist. The ability to recognize racism as an external obstacle which predictably affects one's life chances is hardly fatalistic. On the contrary, it suggests that one's psychological orientations toward self and group are not consonant with the stringently prescribed and effective distortions of reality which are created by racism. "Since racism does exist, awareness of it attests to a sense of reality."[18]

Cross,[7] in an analysis of the black liberation process, helps us to further distinguish and support the significance of the differences between victim- and system-blame orientations in individuals. His analysis would locate the individual who subscribes to the victim-blame orientation in the first stage of the liberation process, or the "preencounter" stage. This individual is:

> . . . programmed to view and think of the world as being non-Black, anti-Black, or the opposite of Black. . . . The sociological, political, cultural and psychological conditions that result from this world view appear to be the same for both lower- and middle-class Black people.

The content of the Black experience within the class system differs but the context is similar, as both think, act and behave in a manner that degrades Blackness. Preencounter Negroes are politically naive and are programmed to believe in the Protestant ethic.

The second stage in the liberation process is the "encounter" stage, which occurs after one has experienced a racist encounter that initiates a slow and cautious series of tests for reinterpretation and validation of an emerging sense of blackness. These two stages of "preencounter" and "encounter" are quite distinct from the fifth and final stage--the "internalization-commitment" stage.[7]

The liberated black individual is functioning from the perspective of a black world view which includes a feeling of inner security and validation, and a state of "psychological blackness." This individual, who is in the "internalization-commitment" stage, is also actively involved in trying to change her community, and defines change in terms of the masses of black people.[7] These differences in psychological orientation have significant implications for and relationships to differences in behavioral (childrearing) patterns.

The four above conceptualizations of the crucial criterion to be used in judging the individual's blame orientation guided the coding and analysis procedures of this research. The mothers' blame orientations were derived from their responses to the two "concept of racism" questions. Mothers' responses to the first question ("anti-black feelings and/or actions"

problems) fell into four major categories: (1) the absence or lack of control over life chances (powerlessness); (2) the absence of access to, quality, and/or opportunity in education; (3) the absence of economic opportunity, parity (in wages and credit), and resources; and (4) the absence of societal support in the socialization process (self/group-concept development, history, culture). The responses to the second question (societal limitations) also represented four major categories: (1) "everything" (health, family, history, culture, politics, economics, housing, education--". . . can't make decisions about where you want to live, swim, go to school, etc."); (2) education (opportunity, quality, representation in public media); (3) economics (income, credit, job options); and (4) negative white attitudes and behavior ("Because of color visibility, everyone has the right to go up and take a pot-shot at you and tell you you're black and what that means.").

Because the study used interview procedures, many mothers provided statements which applied to several of the conceptualization of racism categories. For example, one mother responded to the societal limitations question as follows:

> They have to do with cultural awareness--genocide, education, self-pride. They try to destroy all our heroes and leaders by any means--death, drugs, wars, black families, black history, health, economically and politically.[35]

This response includes descriptions of all four of the major categories of response to the question. Therefore, using content analysis procedures, each item was coded separately and

included in the appropriate concept of racism category. The total of these eight categories was used to measure nominal values in a "Consciousness of Racism" Index.

The Consciousness of Racism Index was based on the three characterological and experiential features of racism as it manifests itself in American society--the ideological, structural, and behavioral features.[20] The types of responses that the mothers gave reflected these categories and were similar to the theoretical conceptualizations and experiences of racism which have been described in social science and popular literature.[1,3,9,11,13,17] The mothers' scores on the Consciousness of Racism Index were then divided into two levels, representing high or low consciousness of racism orientations. Mothers whose scores were between 6 and 8 were coded as having a high consciousness of racism level, and mothers whose scores were between 0 and 2 were coded as having a low consciousness of racism level.

Since over ninety-five per cent of the mothers reported that they had experienced racism, I assumed that all had some consciousness of racial discrimination, exclusion, oppression, and/or inequities. However, it became apparent that the critical variable in this study was the degree to which the mothers' perceptions of racism included the ideological, structural and behavioral features of the phenomenon of racism. Two groups of mothers resulted from the use of these procedures: a high consciousness of racism group and a low consciousness of racism group. Since the responses of the high consciousness

of racism group principally reflected the use of a societal structural approach to the analysis of the sources of racial inequities, these mothers were defined as the "system-blame" orientation group. In contrast, since the responses of the low consciousness of racism group principally reflected the use of an "individual as central" approach to the analysis of the sources of racial inequities, these mothers were defined as the "victim-blame" orientation group.

In this study, the mother who uses a system-blame analysis observes the innumerable disparities between the social realities of blacks and whites, and conceptualizes a "culture of inequality." She will view racism as an ideological and structural phenomenon which directs its energies toward maintaining the systemic oppression of blacks while enhancing the advantages of whites.[3,20,27] The mother who blames the "system" has what Gurin and Epps[18] have described as a "clearly developed ideology of the social and economic causations" of racial inequities.

The mother who uses a victim-blame (individual/group/institution) analysis of racial inequities and oppression participates in her own oppression; although she (the victim) may well have had some experiences with or notions of institutional and/or individual injustice, she is basically bound to adhere to a victim-blame orientation in explaining her own--or others' or a specific institution's--"failures," using such reasoning as, "If I had stayed in school longer . . ." or, "If black men would only support their families . . ." or, "If 'they' had

given me that job . . ." etc.

What we have, then, are mothers who have been divided into two groups, based on their perceptions of what was happening to them in this society. According to my earlier mentioned hypothesis--that there is a linkage between mothers' social reality perceptions and their childrearing patterns--I then developed a procedure for coding the data which measured the mothers' childrearing patterns.

Childrearing patterns

Two sets of questions were used to measure the mothers' childrearing patterns. One set, consisting of open-ended questions, was related to how the mothers nurtured and supported their children with regard to racism; the second set, consisting of sentence completion questions, was used as an indicator of the actual communication styles which the mothers used in responding to their children with regard to racism. The questions measuring nurturing and support were:

(1) "How have you helped your child/children to cope with racism?"

(2) "How have you helped your child/children to cope with the limitations that are placed on blacks in this country?"

These questions were similar and resulted in nearly identical responses. Therefore, they were combined into one descriptive behavioral measure which elicited responses which fell into five modes of behavior: (1) "sharing/talking"--informing, educating (indirect verbalization of sentiments), or "sharing"--giving examples of and helping the child to recognize

and cope with racism (direct verbalization of sentiments); (2) "mothering"--nurturing, supporting, loving, praising, building self-esteem, being there; (3) "modeling"--coping, survival and change strategies, i.e., teaching and living it, finding solutions, being a resource, confronting racism; (4) "exposure/others"--external to self, such as books, television, environmental comparison trips to racially different areas, or "exposure/racism"--"experiencing it"; and (5) "provision of things"--money and/or prayer.

The second set of questions, which measured actual communication styles, is shown below with the response categories elicited:

(1) "What would you say/do if your child asked why whites don't like blacks?" Responses: (a) "ignorant"--they are ignorant, fearful, insecure, threatened by and have a need to feel superior to blacks; (b) "racism"--prejudice and racism for the purpose of maintaining power and feelings of superiority; and (c) "history"--black history and survival of blacks in spite of it.

(2) "What would you say/do if your child said she/he didn't like black people?" Responses: (a) "examine self"--role as mother, what she had or had not done; (b) "understanding"--exhibit understanding if the child was young and the question related to wanting certain advantages, or "reject"--if the child was an adolescent; (c) "instruct"--persuade about the advantages of being black, or black advantages and racism; and (d) "emotional"--hurt, cry, "die," be upset.

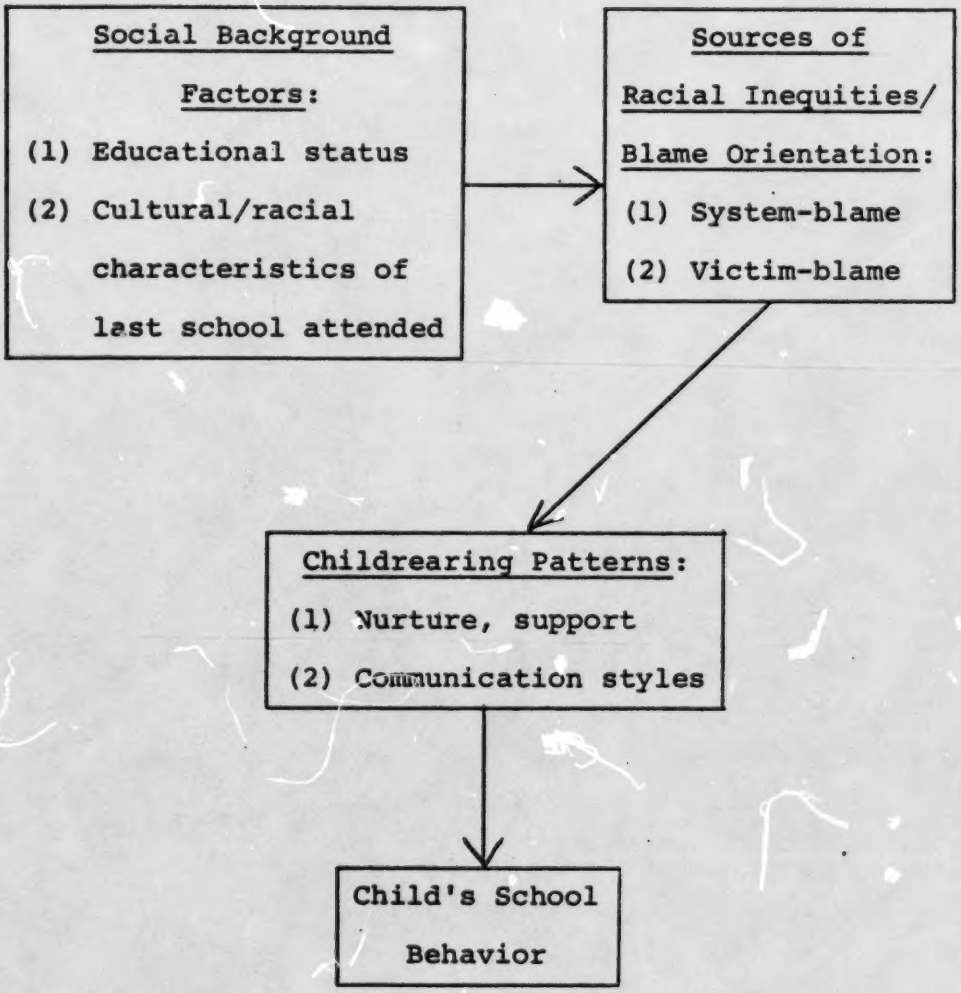
(3) "What would you say/do if your child asked why blacks and whites are not treated the same?" Responses: (a) "racism/white control"--racist society, racism institutionalized, systemic nature; (b) "ignorance"--fear, prejudice, envy; (c) "threatened"--whites are threatened by blacks because they fear blacks are superior; and (d) "history"--of slavery.

System-blame and victim-blame mothers both responded to these questions. Their responses were coded in the appropriate childrearing pattern categories. Although the mothers often reported performing within several of these modalities, each mother tended to cluster her responses around particular modalities. When mothers did indeed respond within several modalities, the responses were coded into their appropriate childrearing pattern categories. This procedure was used for each of the two maternal groups. The system-blame group of mothers tended to be characterized by particular sets of childrearing patterns, and the victim-blame mothers tended to be characterized by another set of childrearing patterns. More will be reported later on the statistically significant childrearing patterns associated with each of the two groups of mothers.

Results

To facilitate the presentation of the data, I will here present a general model which outlines my conception of the linkages between social background factors, blame orientations and childrearing patterns:

Figure 1.--General model of the relationships between parents' backgrounds, sources of racial inequities/blame orientations, and childrearing patterns



The results of the correlational analyses, which were performed to identify the linkages between social background factors, blame orientations and childrearing patterns, will be

presented as follows: (1) educational status (high = college or above; low = high school or below)* and blame orientations; (2) cultural/racial characteristics of the educational environment of the last school attended (mixed/predominantly white or all/predominantly black) and blame orientations; and (3) blame orientations and childrearing patterns.

Educational/social background factors and blame orientation

High educational status was significantly related to the system-blame orientation. Mothers with high educational status used a system-blame orientation in their analyses of the sources of racial inequities. Their perceptions of racism reflected the ideological, structural and behavioral features of racism. Low educational status was significantly associated with a victim-blame orientation. Mothers with low educational status used a victim-blame orientation in their analyses of the sources of racial inequities. Their perceptions of racism were less global, focusing upon one or two specific social institu-

*A total of eleven (17.8 per cent) of the mothers attended all/predominantly black colleges, and forty (64.5 per cent) attended mixed/predominantly white colleges. Only eleven of the mothers (17.8 per cent) were represented in the high school or below category; of these, five were in all/predominantly black and six were in mixed/predominantly white educational environments at this level.

tions (i.e., economic and/or educational), or on individual behaviors. These results verify traditional research hypotheses on the reliability of educational status as a predictor of childrearing patterns. However, the results of an analysis of the covariance between cultural/racial characteristics of the educational environment and the mother's blame orientation led to a more refined delineation of the relationship between these two variables, and qualifies an explanation of the relationship between level of education and perceptions of racism.

High levels of education attained in mixed/predominantly white institutions were associated with the system-blame orientation, while high levels of education attained in all/predominantly black institutions were associated with the victim-blame orientation. The perceptions of racism which were held by the mothers who attained high educational status in all/predominantly black institutions were limited to the economic structure and negative white attitudes and behavior.

All low educational status mothers used the victim-blame orientation. Their perceptions of the effects of racism on the life chances of black people were restricted to educational and economic institution factors. The analysis of covariance of cultural/racial characteristics of educational environment, however indicated that low educational status attained in all/predominantly black institutions was associated with the victim/institution-blame orientation (education and economics perceived as the realm of racism's effects). Low educational status attained in mixed/predominantly white insti-

tutions had no statistically significant association with any specific blame orientation, although there was a suggested association ($p \leq .10$) between that educational/social background and the victim/individual-blame orientation (negative white attitudes and behavior perceived as the source of racism). It appeared to be the experience of college in a mixed or predominantly white educational institution which acted as the predictor of the mothers' usage of a system-blame orientation in their analyses of racial inequities in American society.

Blame orientation and childrearing patterns

Results of the analysis of covariance between mothers' blame orientations and the childrearing patterns (nurture and support, communication styles) they used to help their children cope with racism revealed some clear associations. Mothers who used the system-blame orientation relied on nurturing and support styles which included four patterns of behavior: (1) "modeling," (2) "exposure/others," (3) "sharing," and (4) "mothering." They used communication styles which included three response patterns: (1) "racism" (taught), (2) "examination of self," and (3) "racism/white control."

Mothers who used the victim-blame orientation relied upon either one or two of the following five nurturing and support patterns: (1) "provision of things," (2) "sharing/talking," (3) "mothering," (4) "exposure/racism," and (5) "exposure/others." They used communication styles which included the following six response patterns: (1) "ignorant,"

(2) "instruct about black advantages," (3) "exhibit understanding," (4) "emotional upset," (5) "threatened," and (6) "history." The experience of college in an all/predominantly black educational environment was associated with the use of the "provision of things" and "exposure/others" nurturing and support styles, and with the "instruct about black advantages" communication style. The experience of a high school education in a mixed/predominantly white environment was associated with the use of the "mothering" nurturing and support style and with the "history of blacks" communication style. The experience of high school in an all/predominantly black educational institution was associated with the use of the "sharing/talking" and "exposure/racism" nurturing and support styles, and with the "ignorant" and "threatened" communication styles. Low educational status, regardless of cultural/racial characteristics of educational environment, was associated with the "exhibit understanding" and "emotional upset" communication styles.

The system-blame mothers used a battery of nurturing and support childrearing patterns to help their children cope with the realities of racism: modeling coping strategies, exposure to others who are different, sharing information about their own and others' racist experiences, and mothering. These mothers did not mention the "provision of things" as a childrearing strategy. These childrearing patterns are reflective of an ability to sense the child's need for skills, tools and processes with which to comprehend and cope with the realities of a racist environment, and to assist in the development of

those coping strategies. The development of a positive sense of self, group and/or collective identity if facilitated through this system-blame analysis, which operates to remove the source of the problem from the child and black people in general.

The victim-blame mothers apparently had only one or two nurturing and support and communication styles upon which to rely. Their childrearing patterns are derived from the responsible and accountable individual perspective of the dominant cultural group. They reflect the traditional childrearing mores, such as providing "things," "mothering," "sharing and talking" about the child's interests, ideas and questions, and "exposure to others" and the "finer things in life." The victim-blame mothers are not unaware of the child's need for a positive sense of self, but do not seem as concerned--or concerned at all--with the child's development of a positive sense of group identity. These mothers do not seem to perceive this aspect of identity because of their reliance upon the "individual as central" (or normative) conceptualization of self in society.

The system-blame mother communicates in a style that is system-blame oriented. The responses of "racism is taught" or "racism/white control" evolve from her conceptualization of the ideological and social structural qualities of racism which ascribes blame to the system. The implication of this orientation is that a racist societal structure is designed to create these inequities in social realities, and to manipulate the psychological orientations of individuals. However, systems can be changed--or at least the possibility of change is

offered--and the child may in fact become an agent of change or get involved in change processes.

The communication styles of the victim-blame mothers, on the other hand, reflect their individualistic analyses of issues. They use a personalized approach in their explanations of inequities to the child. The characteristic attribution of ignorance, selfishness and/or greed to white people implies an inherent quality or genetic defect that cannot be corrected. Such responses may leave the child with a sense of hopelessness and/or ineffectiveness. In other words, the implication is that "it's in their (white people's) nature," and nothing aside from genetic engineering or "God's wrath" can change the situation.

Finally, the difference between the victim-blame communication style of "exhibit understanding," as contrasted with the system-blame communication style of "examine myself," in response to the child's expression of dislike of black people, implies certain significantly different psychological orientations. The victim-blame mother's response implies that she is anti-black herself and agrees that blacks as a group are deserving of dislike. It is suggestive of the non- or anti-black individual identity which was suggested in Cross's[7] analysis of the "preencounter" stage of black liberation, and reflects the absence of a sense of collective identity. The system-blame mother's behavior, on the other hand, reflects her own sense of maternal responsibility and the fear of some failure or "oversight" on her part which has caused the child

to have low self/group-esteem. She implies that she is concerned that the child does not recognize the collective part of her identity, and becomes involved in the process of reviewing and analyzing her childrearing strategies to determine how and whether or not she has done all she believed she was doing to help her child to develop a strong personal and collective sense of self. One mother's response to her child's assertion of her dislike of blacks ("What do you mean? Do you mean you don't like yourself, me, your father, your grandparents, . . .?") reflects her own sense of self/group identity and valuation of her child's development of this concept of self/group identity.

Summary and Implications

Social class, as represented by educational status of the mother, has been frequently cited as the cause of most of the variations in childrearing values and behavioral patterns in our society.[15,16,19,22,33] This proposition is reflective of research which, in its "failure to build the ideological, social structural and economic considerations" which pertain in our racist society explicitly into its theory, assumes a monocultural and benign environment in which equal opportunity exists.[18] The results of this study suggest that educational status alone does not account for most of the variations in childrearing patterns regarding racism. Instead, it is the educational status of the mother in combination with the cultural/racial characteristics of her educational environment

which act as the predictors of the mother's perceptions of racism and the type of blame orientation she uses in her analysis of the sources of racial inequities.

The theoretical propositions which suggest that interracial isolation and integration have some effect on the individual's perceptions of and attitudes toward others who are racially different from herself are relevant to this study.[5,21] It was the experience of college in a mixed or predominantly white cultural/racial educational environment which was the predictor of the mother's usage of a "system-blame" orientation in her analysis of the racial inequities in our society. The experience of college in an all or predominantly black cultural/racial educational environment and low educational status (regardless of cultural/racial environment) were predictors of the mother's use of a "victim-blame" orientation in her analysis of the sources of the racial inequities which exist within the society. In other words, the cultural/racial environmental experiences of the mother--a factor which has not been included in traditional research--impact upon the mother's perceptions of her social reality, and these in turn impact upon her childrearing patterns. It must be concluded, therefore, that mothers' perceptions of their social realities are inculcated through a complex interaction of racial identity, cultural/racial characteristics of educational environment, and level of education.

The psychological orientations of these mothers were in turn translated into and/or became the predictors of their child-

rearing patterns regarding racism. The social interactionist paradigm which describes the childrearing practices of the mother as "products of the external and internal environmental and cultural factors operating" in her life[19] is reflected in this study, which demonstrates the associations between the mothers' psychological orientations and their childrearing patterns with regard to racism. The experience of external environmental and cultural factors which pertained in the mixed/predominantly white college experience predisposed mothers to use a system-blame orientation in their analyses of racial inequities and their childrearing patterns which were different from those of the mothers who had not had this experience and were therefore predisposed to use a victim-blame analysis.

The overall implication of this study is conceptually clear and simple. The impact of the maternal experiences and social reality perceptions upon childrearing patterns is significant. To the extent that the mother perceives her social realities as responsive to and determined by her own efforts and energies, she will convey these perceptions and a sense of self-determination to her progeny. The socialization of the black child in a racist society is an awesome, challenging and sometimes overwhelming responsibility. However, the use of a system-blame analysis in explicating the gross inequities which exist in this society and the discrepancies between black and white realities helps the mother to provide more effectively the kinds of nurturing and support which a black child needs if she is to comprehend and cope with racism without undergoing

severe physical and/or psychological damage.

Traditional research has offered suggestions for change in childrearing techniques and patterns. However, as this study demonstrates, changes in childrearing patterns are not likely to occur, nor would they be effective, without the more significant change in the world view or psychological orientation of the mother. This research demonstrates that the psychological orientation of the mother is one of the most critical elements--if not the most critical element--in determining the quality of her childrearing patterns.

The ecological phenomenon of racism and its endemic elements suggests an explanation of why the experience of college in a mixed or predominantly white environment seems to operate so as to bring about a "change" in the individual's blame orientation. The black individual who has fulfilled the tenets of the Protestant ethic and has been exposed to the actual non-superiority of whites as a racial group continues to experience racial oppression. This contradiction would make it impossible--or at least extremely difficult--to continue to subscribe to an "individual as central" explication of racism.

If educators and other human services personnel wish to relate effectively to and serve black children and their parents, they must first recognize the differences in social realities inherent in a racist society. The recognition of these differences must be incorporated into the educational approaches devised to facilitate parents' involvement in both the education of their own children and the development of

black children in a racist society.

Teachers, particularly, in our integrated school settings, need to recognize and be able to cope with these differences in social reality perceptions and the consequent behavioral patterns if they are to respond effectively to individual black children and to ward off alienating interactions between black and white individuals.

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